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Vocabulary Readers

MONSTERS OF MYTH

by Tanner Ottley Gay

illustrated by Alan Flinn



Number of Words: 522

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Strategy Focus

Before you read, look at the pictures and headings. What can you **infer** about monsters in myths? What do you **predict** you will find out?



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BOSTON

Key Vocabulary

ancient very old; from a long time ago

behavior the way a person acts

characteristics special qualities

hero a strong, brave person who does great things

myth a story that usually explains a belief or a part of the natural world

nature the world of living things and the outdoors

relationship a connection

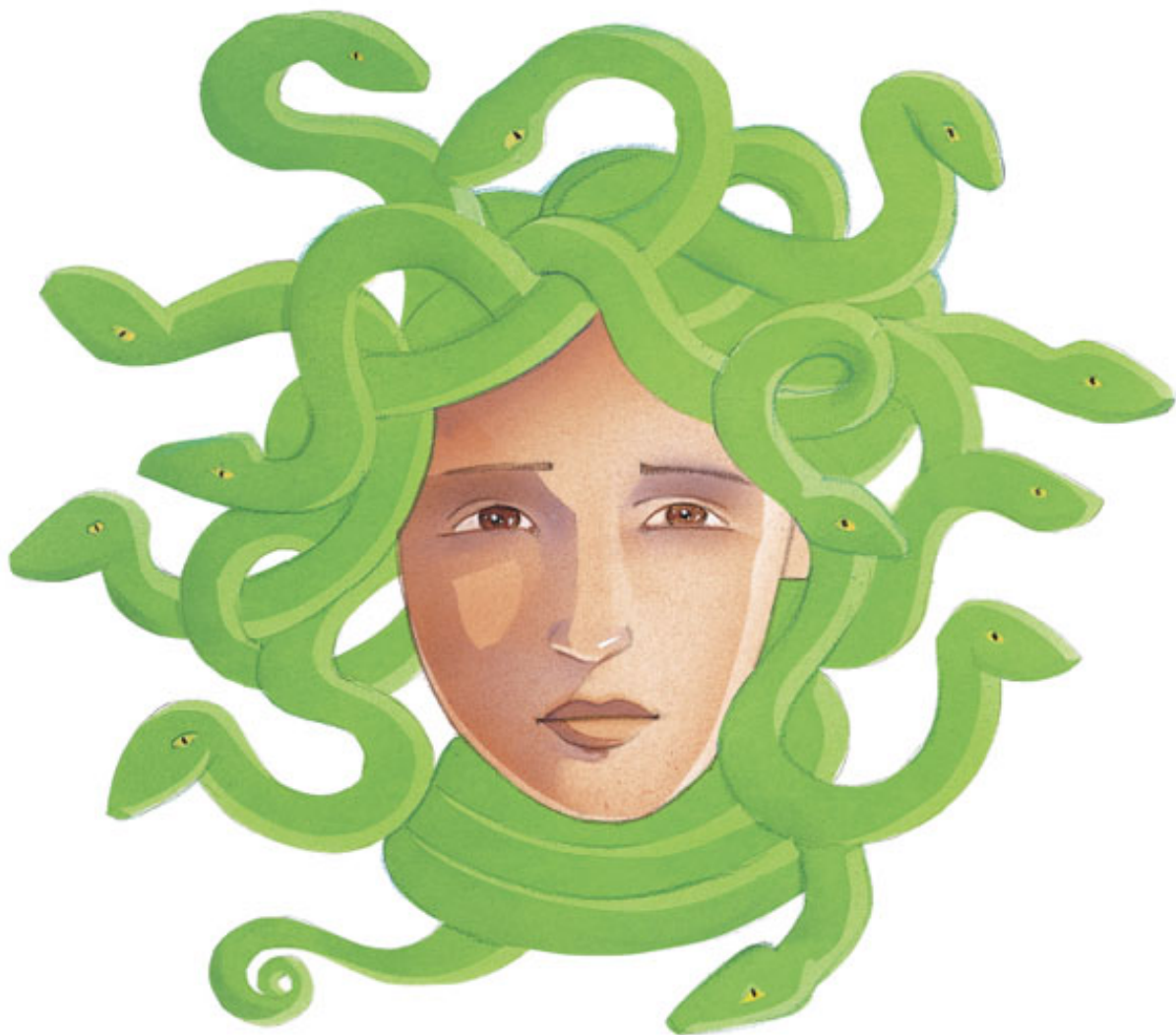
task a difficult job

Word Teaser

What kind of character rhymes with *zero*, but would never be called a zero?

People have always loved monster stories. They are scary and exciting, just as a good story should be! Some of the best stories about monsters have been around for thousands of years.

Traditional **myths**, or stories, often tell about a brave person who saves people from a frightening monster.



A monster from long ago

A Monster Myth

One famous monster from ancient times had the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a snake. It breathed fire, too!

In one myth, the monster used its fiery breath to destroy all the crops in the land. The king wanted the monster dead.

He sent a brave young man to fight the monster.

The young man knew he faced a difficult task. He got a magical flying horse to help him.

The young man rode and rode until he found the monster. The monster was terrifying. It breathed its deadly flames toward the man and his horse. But the flying horse soared up into the sky, away from the flames. The young man aimed his bow and arrows. He killed the monster!

The people of the kingdom thanked the young man for his bravery. They called him a hero.

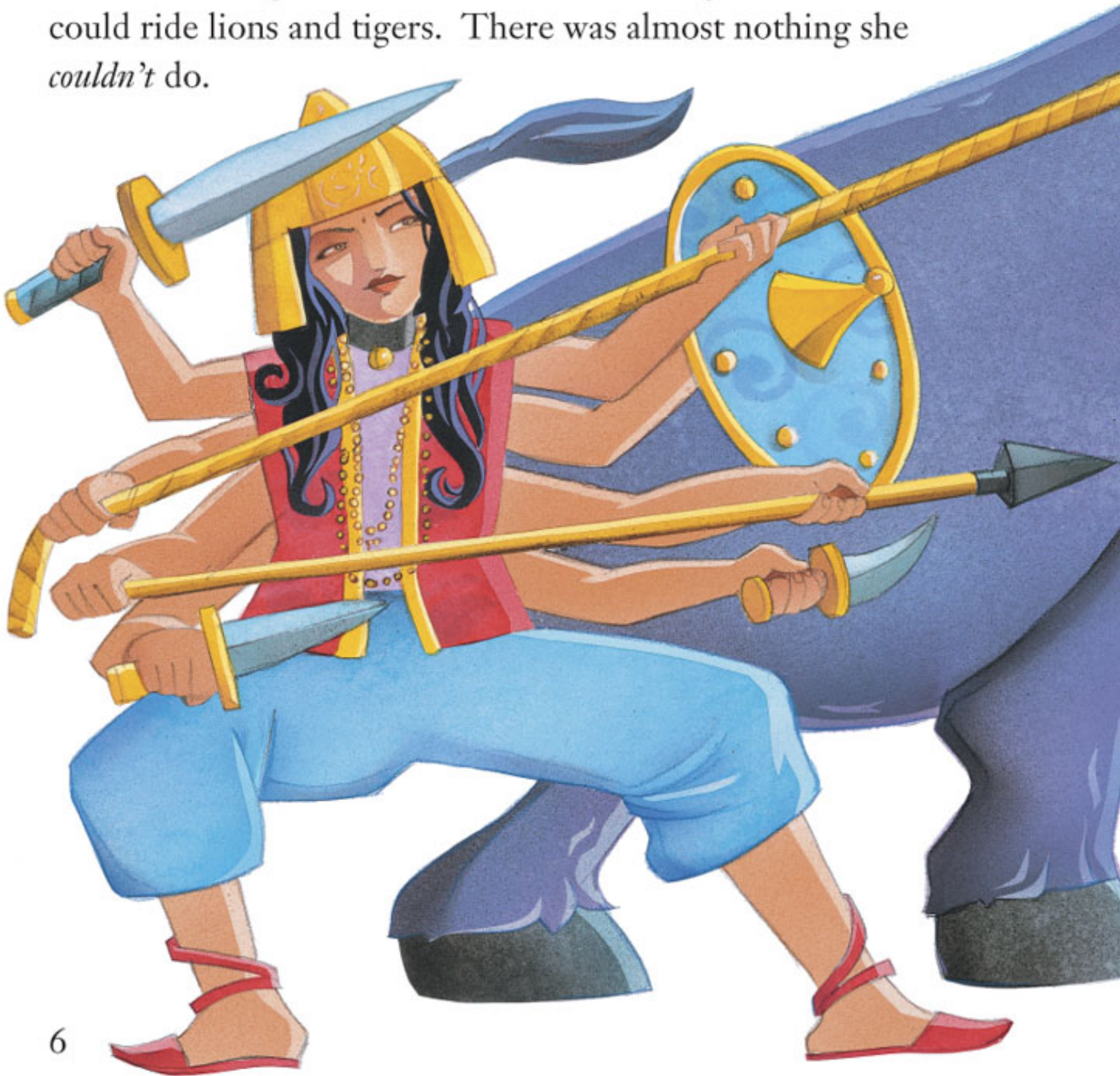


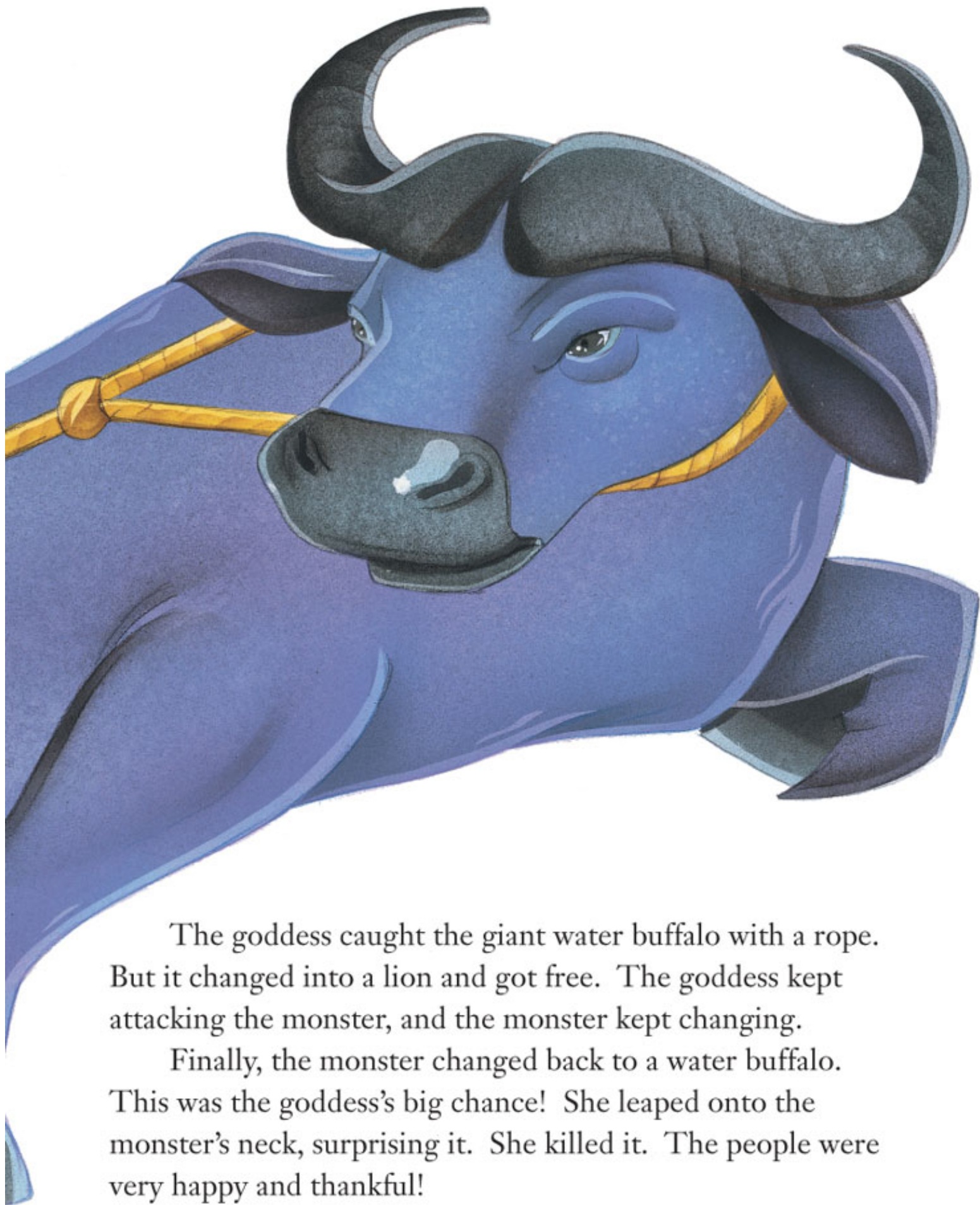


A Myth from India

In India, myths tell about a giant water buffalo. The buffalo could escape almost anyone who tried to catch it. It could suddenly change its shape, making itself look like another creature!

In one myth, a brave goddess decided to kill the monster. The goddess was a warrior with eight arms. She could ride lions and tigers. There was almost nothing she *couldn't* do.





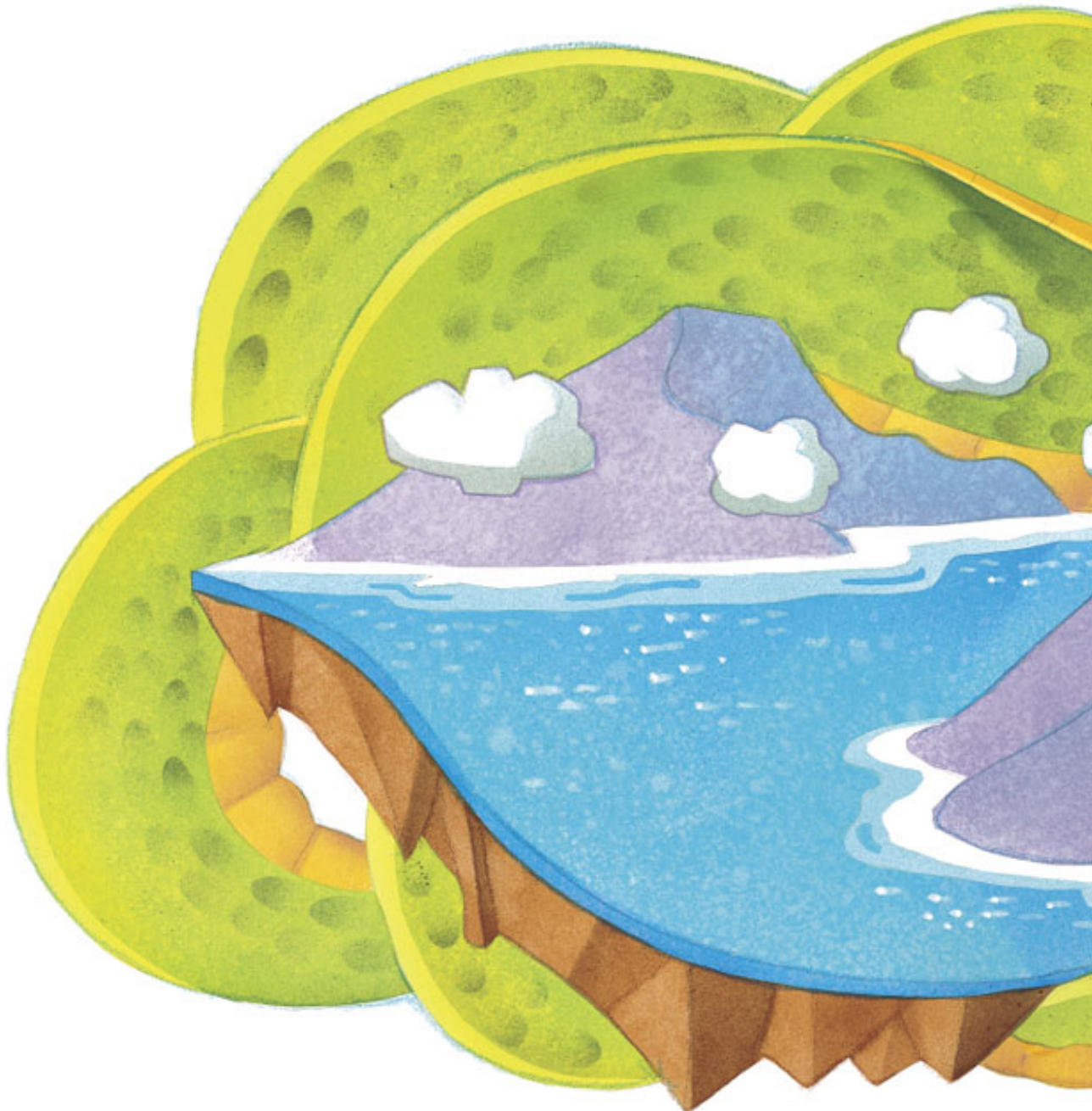
The goddess caught the giant water buffalo with a rope. But it changed into a lion and got free. The goddess kept attacking the monster, and the monster kept changing.

Finally, the monster changed back to a water buffalo. This was the goddess's big chance! She leaped onto the monster's neck, surprising it. She killed it. The people were very happy and thankful!

World Serpents

Not all monsters are horrible. Some use their amazing powers to help people.

One good monster is called the World Serpent. It appears in myths from all over the world. The World Serpent is described in different ways. But it always has some common traits, or **characteristics**.

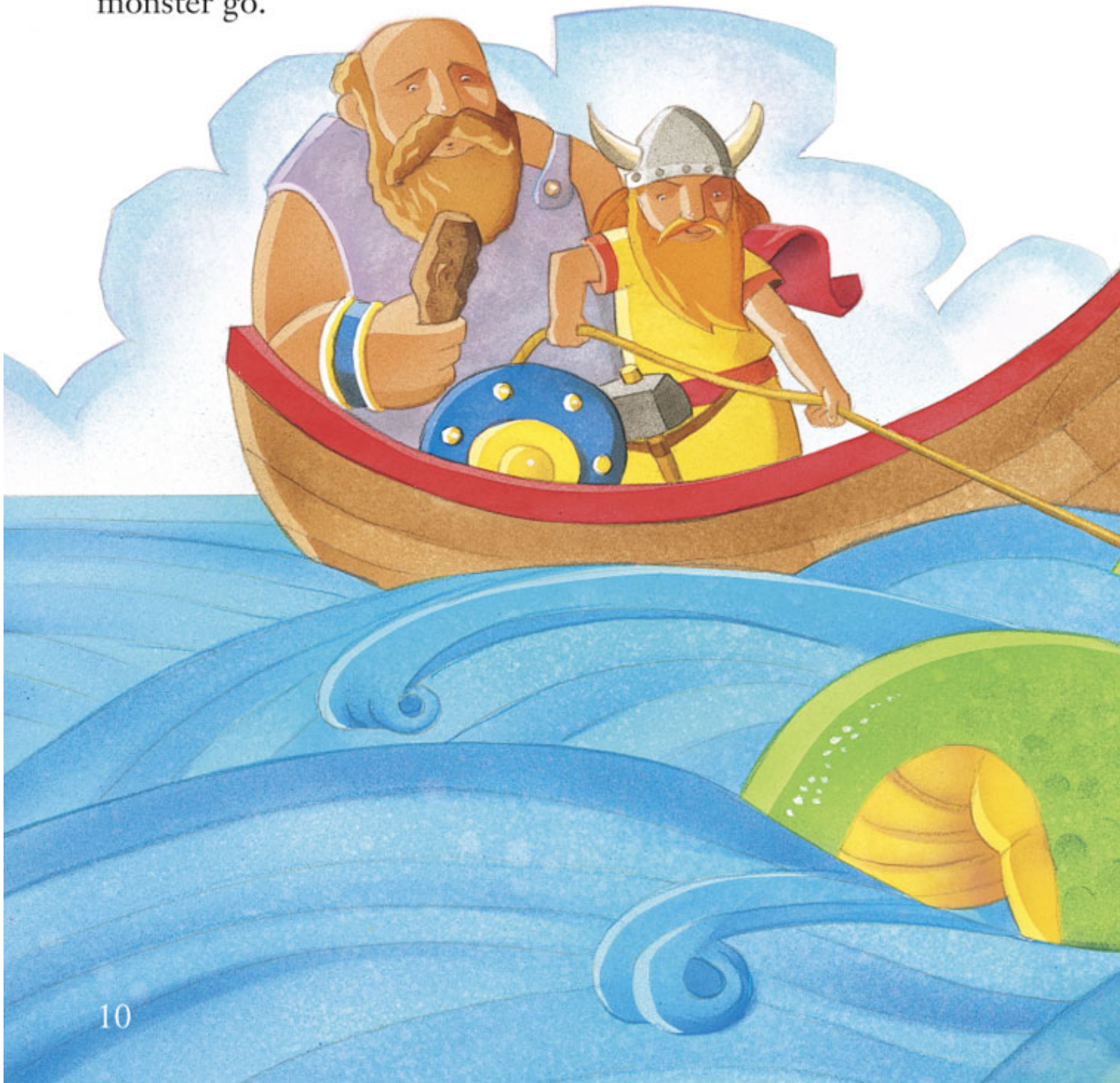


The World Serpent is always a giant snake. It lives in the sea or underground. According to some myths, the World Serpent has a special **relationship**, or connection, with the world. Some people believe the serpent protects all living things in **nature**, including plants and animals. Some believe the serpent holds up the earth in the sky.



Long ago in northern Europe, people told a myth about a serpent named Jormungand [YORE mun gahnd]. In one myth, the god of thunder, named Thor, caught the serpent.

But Thor was afraid to kill the serpent. If he did, maybe the earth would fall out of the sky! Thor's behavior, or actions, could destroy the world. Finally, Thor let the monster go.



Is a World Serpent still holding the earth in the sky? Is another monster waiting to battle a hero? Only the world of myths can tell you!



Responding

Putting Words to Work

1. Think of someone who is a **hero**. What **characteristics** make him or her a hero?
2. Why do you think so many monster **myths** tell about **nature**?
3. What do you think of Thor's **behavior**? Did you predict that he would let the serpent go? Why or why not?
4. Why do people enjoy **ancient myths**?
5. **PARTNER ACTIVITY:** Think of a word you learned in the text. Explain its meaning to your partner and give an example.

Answer to Word Teaser

a hero

Word Builder

Copy this chart. Use it to list **tasks** you do at home and at school. Then compare your lists with a partner.

Tasks	
Tasks I Do at Home	Tasks I Do at School

Write About It

Choose one of the tasks you listed on the chart. Write a paragraph telling what you like (or don't like) about that task.

Key Vocabulary

ancient

behavior

characteristics

hero

myth

nature

relationship

task

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